

JOAQUIN has strengthened to a Category 4 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 130 mph. The storm has maintained the same slow southwestward movement as expected, although a turn towards the northwest and north is forecast to occur on Friday. By tomorrow night, JOAQUIN is expected to increase in forward speed as it begins its journey up the US coast.

Favorable environmental conditions could allow for JOAQUIN to undergo additional strengthening over the next 24 hours. However, after that time, the storm is expected to slowly weaken.

Unfortunately, the confidence in the track forecast remains low after 72 hours due to continued model discrepancies. The threat for heavy rainfall across North Carolina remains in the forefront despite JOAQUIN's uncertainties. A Flash Flood Watch is in effect beginning Friday through Sunday evening for much of the state. Heavier rainfall will remain pinned to the eastern Piedmont and Coastal Plain tonight in conjunction with a stalled frontal boundary in the same vicinity. Impacts will be localized urban and poor drainage flooding.

Moderate to heavy rainfall will progress farther inland into interior sections of NC Friday. Eastern areas could get a brief reprieve from the heaviest rains. As JOAQUIN moves northward, the trend of heavy rain across the west will continue this weekend. The presence of gusty winds and saturated grounds will contribute to scattered power outages. The river flood threat will also increase through the weekend and into next week.

